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INTERACTION BETWEEN NEWSPAPERS, TELEVISION AND ORAL NARRATION IN THE CITY OF ZAGREB

Summary

The paper describes ways in which oral narration in Zagreb interacts with the mass media. The following developments are discussed: stories which orally circulate in the city of Zagreb and are then picked up by newspapers; examples of traditional tales taken over from different sources by newspapers and television and given new currency; finally, current television programmes which become a starting point for new orally circulated stories.

The first example is that of the well-known story of rapacious parents who rob and kill their long-absent son before they recognize him. This story connects oral tradition with literature (Camus!) and newspaper reportings, and it is the newspapers that bring the legend back into oral circulation.

Examples of orally circulating stories picked up by newspapers include those of the fake hitchhiking woman, of the phantom girl-hitchhiker, of a girl run over by a car and subsequent tussle among the drivers leading to multiple murders, of the body of a dead mother-in-law being stolen from the boot of the car, etc.

All these stories are placed here in their social context and shown in relation to traditional stories: they are analysed within the framework of adequate comparative literature.

Other examples which are given are modern tales with recognizable traditional models and their versions as given by newspapers and television. They deal with a supposedly murdered body on a train (as in Aa Th 1536 and 1537), a man paying his mistress's favours with her husband's money (Aa Th 1420 C), a policeman failing to recognize an important dignitary and who recognizes him later under spectacular circumstances (as in Aa Th 952), etc.

The paper also discusses rumours and their reporting in newspapers, involving cases such as those of poisonous worms, massive corruption resulting in the leakage of schools-entrance examination tests, an unexpected find of a bag full of gold.

The paper then goes on to analyze newspaper and television stories containing old local legends, jokes, popular local anecdotes, in all of which one can trace elements of entertainment, locally or historically coloured nostalgia, tourist advertising and folklorism. Examples of such jokes and legends are: Aa Th 1210, 1310, 1829, 1276, 1531, etc., as well as legends about ancient castles, buried treasures, witches' sessions, unfortunate lovers, pirates, wicked feudal lords, King Mathias the Just, great heroes of the past, Prince Marko, the Pula amphitheatre built by fairies, the siege

Zagrebačka usmena pričanja u prepletanju s novinama i televizijom

of a fortress which was saved by the smart idea of firing the last chicken from the famine-ridden city into the enemy ranks. This last example of a local legend has inspired the citizens of a small town to organize spectacular folkloristic shows every year to commemorate the »event«.

The author reviews newspaper accounts and readers' letters dealing with the lives of two brigands from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who are even now often presented as »noble criminals« — without a basis in historical fact.

Another set of anecdotes, circulated orally, and its television and newspaper counterparts have a popular Second World War Partisan commander as their protagonist.

Finally, the author shows how jokes began to be told about the main character of a popular television series which have many elements of the jokes with Count Bobby at the centre. Television has thus become the source of a new oral tradition.

In conclusion, the author considers the difficulties that one encounters in trying to make authentic records of modern urban narration. She stresses the need to study the relation between their content and the form of expression and to examine the effects on the formation of these stories by newspapers and television.

A shorter version of this paper, in German, has been published in the issue of the journal *Fabula* devoted to Max Lüthi.

(Translated by V. Ivir)